

# Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of  
Social Services

Group Activities

Issue 13 Summer 1987

## JAZZING UP THE ROUTINES

Patricia Hearron

Center Licensing Consultant, Saginaw County

Does your morning program always start with the same song, followed by roll call, calendar, weather, some fingerplays and a story interrupted by too many requests for the cooperation of the audience? Does "show-and-tell" seem to consist mostly of them showing and you telling — telling Jimmy to sit still and Sarah to wait her turn? It could be that your cherished classroom routines have become a rut that stifles your creativity as well as that of your children.

It is true that children need consistency and predictability in their lives, and classroom routines are one way of providing them — especially for children who are new to group care. But the routines that provide comfort and assurance are knowing that outdoor play follows large group and that mommy will be coming after nap. It doesn't mean having to sit through roll call every day while your teacher pretends she doesn't know you are here until you say "Present." The art of caring for young children is knowing where to draw the line between comfortable routine and tiresome rigidity.

"But," you may say, "we have to take attendance. Children need to learn about calendars and weather. And they love to have 'show-and-tell.'" If these activities are truly important to your program, then they deserve to be treated as interesting experiences rather than things that are done just because they are always done. The process of taking attendance, for example, can be seen as either a bookkeeping chore for you or an experience in social awareness and understanding for a number of children. If it is just a bookkeeping chore, why bother the children with it at all? Parents can check off their children's names as they enter. Or children can find their own nametags from a display near the entrance, and later in the morning you can simply make a note of the nametags that remain on the display so you know who is absent.

If taking attendance is to be a learning experience, why not try it with music? Early in the year, or whenever you have several new children in your program, you can sing a little verse about each child. The children will join in soon enough, and the child you sing about will take pleasure in feeling special. Later,

(Continued on page 2)

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The division periodically receives questions regarding when a day care facility is considered to be over capacity. A provider is over capacity any time the number of children in care exceeds the number on the provider's license or certificate of registration. When this happens, the licensing consultant will cite the facility in noncompliance.

The department expects that compliance with the Act and all administrative rules will be met. A provider's responsibility with respect to capacity is a legal one, nothing more and nothing less. **The need for additional day care resources is not an acceptable reason for disregarding the law.**

The consequences of over capacity may vary depending on the circumstances which led to noncompliance with the capacity requirements. A pattern of over capacity could very well eventually result in the department taking an action to revoke the Certificate of Registration or License.

In addition to having a legal responsibility to comply with licensing regulations, providers act in their own self-interest by doing so. Should a child be injured or killed in a home which is out of compliance, the chance of the provider losing a subsequent law suit increases. Additionally, insurance companies have been known to refuse to pay damages when an accident occurs where a law was violated, regardless of whether the violation contributed directly to the accident. I share this information with you because the consequences of exceeding capacity may go beyond losing a license.

We need to work together creatively to consider changes in the law which will enhance the ability of day care providers to meet the needs of the broader community without placing children at risk and without violating existing laws and requirements. These issues are complex and I don't mean to sound unsympathetic. However, the Division of Child Day Care Licensing is expected to carry out its legal mandate just as providers are expected to carry out theirs. Therefore, licensing consultants are required to cite noncompliance when a facility exceeds its capacity, and to take whatever enforcement action is necessary depending on individual circumstances.

Ted deWolf, Director

1 Division of Child Day Care Licensing

when the children know each other's names, you might just ask them who is not present on any given day. Snapshots of each child in the group, placed near the spot where you hold your group gathering will help them to remember. This activity could lead to a discussion about why Sam is not here today, and perhaps a group project of making a get well card for a sick friend.

Calendar and weather activities are so much more meaningful when children experience them in the context of their real everyday lives. If there is some unusual weather occurrence on any given day, the children will surely be talking about it as they arrive — or you can make a note of it "My, I see you wore your new snowmobile suit. It must really be cold out there this morning!"

At any rate, the natural opportunity for discussing the weather presents itself when you are getting ready to go outside. And a discussion of wind or warmth will be much more meaningful to a child if it is followed up by the action of dressing appropriately and then really feeling the bite of March winds or May sunshine on cheeks. Adults can add a little spice — and check out children's understanding — by making "mistakes" in dressing themselves for the weather: bundling up in muffler and mittens on a sunny day and letting the children "correct" them.

Children who are ready to deal with symbols might enjoy recording the weather on a graph during their free-choice activity time. Once one or two children develop an interest, they will be happy to check out and discuss their observations with each other. This freely chosen small-group activity, will be much more meaningful than a perfunctory glance out the window each morning at large group time.

Calendars can make sense to children only if they relate to their own lives. Instead of the routine questions each morning, "What month is it?" — which is invariably followed by a response such as "Easter" or "Tuesday" — why not keep a large calendar prominently posted where children can see it and see you refer to it often. Mark the date for Johnny's upcoming doctor's appointment. Note Suzy's birthday and other important events. Mark the date an absent friend is coming back from vacation and help the children count the days till her return. Letting children see how calendars can be used makes more sense to them than reciting months and days and numbers by rote each day.

Show-and-Tell, that kindergarten "bring-and-brag" classic that has invaded preschool, can be painfully monotonous and an occasion for the more verbal children to dominate the scene. When planning for an activity like this, it is important to keep the overall goal in mind. Most proponents of "show-and-tell" argue that it fosters children's ability to speak before groups with confidence. Perhaps in preschool we should be more concerned about their ability to simply express themselves and convey information with language. Let the performing before groups come later.

There are several alternatives to "show-and-tell."

You might designate a table where children could place special objects from home. That way, a child could bring a friend or small group of friends to the table and have a real discussion, with give and take, about the object. Sometimes a child will bring a favorite toy that he wants to use in the sandbox or the housekeeping corner. This will take careful monitoring on your part and perhaps a suggestion that more fragile toys stay on the display table. Some children bring their own creations to share with friends at school. One preschooler made a mask from a portion of a styrofoam egg carton and string. When he brought it to school, he found himself in the role of resident expert at the art table as all his friends wanted to make one just like it.

Even in an adult-directed group setting, "show-and-tell" can be made more interesting if only a few children "perform" on any given day. You might try having them place their object in a large bag and give hints until the children guess what it is. Whatever the routine activity that you find indispensable to your program, a little creativity can make it more interesting and worthwhile for everyone.

## A BAKER'S DOZEN OF GROUP MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

*Sandra Settergren*

*Day Care Home Consultant, Washtenaw County*

1. Use an appropriate area for an activity — not too small or large.
2. Have appropriate equipment for the activity — proper size, enough for everybody, etc.
3. Be prepared for each activity and each day.
4. Keep children involved in the activity instead of just watching or listening.
5. Schedule appropriate activities at the right time of day.
6. Do activities that you enjoy and convey that enjoyment to the children.
7. Do not overschedule children — leave them time to choose their own activities and rest.
8. If a major distraction occurs, instead of trying to ignore it, discuss it with the children and make it an interesting learning experience.
9. Have soothing background music when you want children to calm down.
10. Give positive attention to children behaving appropriately in the group rather than negative attention to the disrupters.
11. Keep teacher-directed group activities short and lively.
12. For story time or group games use carpet squares or taped circles to define each child's personal space.
13. Finally, make sure the activities fit the ages and developmental levels of the children.

# IT'S NOT WHETHER YOU WIN OR LOSE BUT HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME

James Strach, Director  
Saginaw Community Education, Saginaw County

*You CAN'T know too many!  
They're like Food — or clothes.  
Pick them for the PERSON.*

- Handholding games for scared Tykes
- Let's Pretend games for Slightly-Olders
- All girl games for the I-Hate-Boys-Set
- All boy games for the I-Hate-Girls-Set
- Stretch-the-mind games for Young-Thinkers
- Stretch-the-body games for Young-Athletes
- Show-off games for the Almost Teens
- Two-Some and Four-Somes for the Jukebox Set
- Make-me-laugh games for Grown-ups

Think about the PEOPLE-PLAYERS. How old are they? How many are there? All boys? All girls? Mixed? Think about the game. What can it DO for the players?

- Provide a friendly setting?
- Exercise the body?
- Stimulate the "little gray cells?"
- Teach a new skill, or increase skills?
- Have any carryover value?
- Increase observation? Vocabulary?
- Encourage quick response?
- Provide chances for making up rules — and accepting them?
- Provide outlets for aggression — acceptable and safe?

Here are some specific techniques for organizing and leading games that will make playing them more enjoyable experiences for the leader and participants.

Announcing the name of the game first, particularly to primary age children, can be a time waster. Hearing the name of the game first seems to stimulate the children to such a degree that time must be then spent regaining their attention. After directions are clear the name can be told.

Place the children in the starting position and then proceed with a demonstration of the activity.

To insure the success of a new game, the leader should be "it" first or choose an alert child to start the game. Children at the primary level enjoy having the leader participate in the activity.

Don't eliminate players from the game since your specific objective should be to have maximum participation by all. It would be defeating your purpose if players were eliminated.

In games of chase, make a rule against tagging and retagging between two players as they will tend to monopolize the game.

In order to provide more activity, divide large groups into smaller groups.

To gain attention and keep a game under control draw out the call of signals (numbers and names). Example: All — of — the — (pause) trees run.

Use the fastest and shortest possible method of changing from one formation to another. Example: If the first game is a circle game and the second calls for two teams, divide the circle.

Avoid situations where the children are asked to choose partners.

Six and seven year olds often do not respond positively to the command to join hands and make a circle. They will push and pull, break the circle by going to another place, fall on the floor, and in general waste time if you allow them to. A good leader will lead a group into an activity or into doing something without them even knowing it. The following practices have been used successfully in getting youngsters into circle formation:

- (a) One for the money — two for the show — all get ready — let's go (pause) MAKE A CIRCLE. If the circle needs to be larger, have the children take, one giant step backwards or four bunny hops backwards, etc.
- (b) The leader can do a follow-the-leader game to lead the group into a circle.
- (c) On your mark! Don't be slow! Let's go! Or YOU'LL BE THE LAST ONE WITH YOUR TOE ON THE CIRCLE. Praise those children who are in proper circle formation first.
- (d) The leader closes his eyes and counts slowly to ten; and the children strive to tip toe to the circle by the final count of ten without the leader hearing them.





# PROGRAM ENRICHMENT THROUGH TRIPS

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A trip may be any experience which takes children from their own room or home to make discoveries about their world. It may be a discovery walk in the immediate neighborhood or a short excursion to a specific place. Regardless of the type, a trip can enrich the program if it has a meaningful purpose and is carefully planned.

A trip may help children:

- find out about their surroundings
- sharpen observation skills
- clarify misconceptions, correct misinformation, and broaden knowledge
- increase language skills
- understand and appreciate the community, and people in it
- practice safety habits.

With your objectives clearly in mind, consider the kind of trip you want to take. Trips to the local fire or police station and the bread bakery are common.

## Planning Checklist

This checklist can help you decide whether to take a trip and what kind of trip is best.

- Is a trip the best method for helping children acquire knowledge or develop understanding about an expressed interest or theme?
- Can most of your objectives be achieved?
- Can the trip be brief, simple, unhurried, interesting, and enjoyable?
- Would the trip be a truly new experience?
- Are the children secure enough to leave the familiarity of the home or center to go to a strange place?
- Is the experience appropriate to the children's maturity?
- Can the children get close enough to see, hear, feel, smell, taste, or manipulate?
- Have at least two weeks passed since your last trip?
- If the trip is to a specific place, is it close enough to your center or home to prevent exhaustion, overstimulation, or interruption of the children's eating and resting schedule? Can the time at the site be kept to 30 minutes or less?
- Do you have one adult for every two to six children?

- Is transportation available? Have you satisfied licensing and insurance requirements for driver and vehicle?
- Will the route or site be safe for the children?
- Will you, a co-worker, or a volunteer have time to visit the route or site in advance to enable you to plan wisely?
- Is the destination uncrowded at this time of day or year?
- Will the person in charge at the destination accept children of your group's size and age level?

If you answer yes to each question, you're ready to begin making definite plans.

## Preparation

Start planning by having a general idea of where and when you're going. Select a day as early in the week as possible (not Monday) to allow time for children to absorb the experience afterward and express their reactions in various activities. Also determine which children will go. In many cases, it's more practical if only part of the group goes at one time.

Discuss the idea with your center director or other appropriate person. Secure permission if necessary. Work out an appropriate schedule if other rooms or people such as the garbage collectors are involved. If you're going to a specific location, contact the person in charge to discuss bringing a group of children for a learning experience. Explain how old the children are, how many adults and children are coming, when you will arrive, how long you will stay, and what you anticipate happening. Set the date for the trip. Arrange for transportation if needed.

Contact parents to give them the date, location, type, and purpose of the trip. If necessary, explain that the children will need special clothing or fees. Enlist parents as volunteers when possible. Get written permission for each child to go on the trip.

Secure materials and plan activities that will provide background information to the children before the trip and reinforcement afterward. Begin gathering appropriate props to role play the experience.

Make sturdy but comfortable name tags that can be fastened securely to each child. Include the child's name and the name, address and telephone number of the center or home. Prepare an emergency bag with tissues, safety pins, bandages, extra underclothes, and money (for telephone calls, beverages, or other unexpected situations). Arrange for a pictorial or sound record of the trip if possible. If you plan to collect items on the trip, prepare clear plastic sandwich bags to carry your treasures. Or make a bracelet for each child, using wide masking tape with the adhesive on the outside and let the children stick interesting objects to it. Equally important, make other plans in case the trip is cancelled.

If you plan a walk to make discoveries along the

# HELPING CHILDREN MAKE TRANSITION FROM CHILD CARE PROGRAMS TO KINDERGARTEN

Miriam Swiegart, Early Elementary Supervisor  
School District of City of Saginaw

When faced with leaving their child care program to attend kindergarten, children experience a variety of emotions ranging from sheer delight to eager anticipation to debilitating worry and depression. Most children impatiently await the day they are finally ready to attend elementary school. At the same time, they feel anxious about leaving the environment, friends and adults they know and love.

Providers and parents who are aware of the necessity to carefully plan the smooth entry of young children into an early childhood program, must also commit themselves to creatively plan for the end-of-the-year period. The individual effects of separation from early childhood programs will be as different as the families who participate in those programs. The consequences of the separation will depend on the reason for separating, the care during the separation, the child's age and maturity, and the quality of family relationships.

How can providers and parents help ease this important transition for children? As children develop, they experience new feelings. Adults help when they express similar feelings and model appropriate ways of handling bewildering emotions. Take time to listen to the worries and fears of children. Just to know that an adult cares can be comforting. As you respond in an understanding manner, take the opportunity to gradually provide new information about what kindergarten will be like. You are building pleasurable images within the children which will help make the new situation more appealing.

Children move to kindergarten as a natural result of growing up. Take frequent snapshots and talk about the changes that have occurred over time. Note physical changes, identify new skills, jog memories on what used to be, always emphasizing the maturation that has taken place. Encourage the children to express their understanding of growth changes, and in so doing, help them to know themselves better.

Plan a visit to the new classroom, if possible. Having the opportunity to actually see the building, the classroom, and its facilities, along with meeting some of the staff, may be the concrete evidence needed to help alleviate undue concern over what's next. Even if you can't tour the inside of the new school, drive by,

find the playground or other points of interest and invite conversation and questions.

Finally, adults can ease the transition by including future-oriented learning activities during the closing days in child care. Discuss what next year might be like and which children will be in kindergarten together. Exchange plans and feelings with both parents and children. Allow the children opportunities to role play leaving child care, acting out their thoughts, fears and anticipations. Read any appropriate books about leaving child care. Provide some treasures accumulated over the year, such as photos or individually made books, to be taken home as lasting mementos of the good times shared.

Children's earliest experiences color their lifelong view of themselves and exercise powerful influences over their lives. How children handle separation is no exception, as it is closely tied in with their view of themselves. If the current child care experience is one in which children are valued and respected, thereby building feelings of self-worth and confidence, future changes can be experienced with greater ease. Our efforts will be rewarded when, come September, happy, confident children fill the kindergarten classrooms.

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# LET'S GO FLY A KITE

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*"Let's go fly a kite, Up to the highest height.  
Let's go fly a kite, And send it soaring  
Up in the atmosphere, Up where the air is clear.  
Oh, let's go fly a kite!"*

Mary Poppins and the children she cared for aren't the only ones who think that flying a kite is terrific fun, especially when the wind is just right.

Most of us think of kites during March, when the winds are strong and the air can be cold, so kite flying becomes hard work in no time at all. The truth of the matter is that kite flying is more fun and pleasant during warmer months when the sun is out and the breezes are gentle.

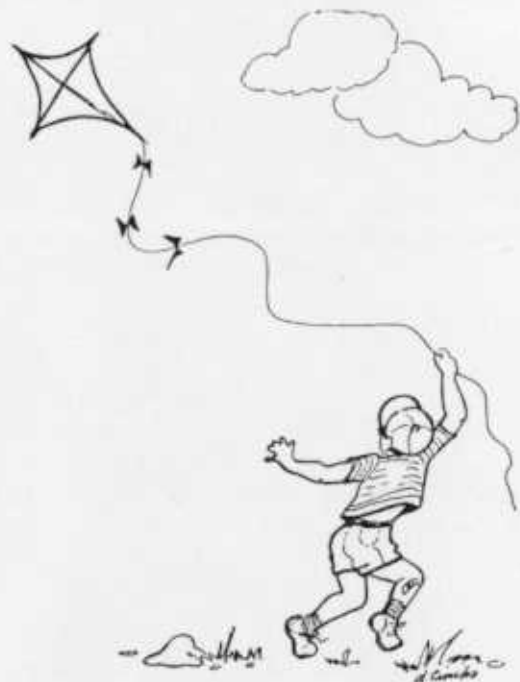
Kites and kite flying should be fun, with just a little bit of work involved to get the kite flying well. Many adults have terrible memories of running down a field dragging a non-flying kite behind them when they were children. A few helpful hints may prevent this experience being passed on to today's children.

1. Homemade kites are fun only if they fly! To insure that flying ability, forget the construction paper kites so many children make in preschool settings. They may be colorful and easier to cut out, but they are definitely not designed for flying. Many kites are successfully made from brightly colored plastic garbage bags, reinforced tissue paper, or ripstop nylon or mylar plastic. The material used must be both sturdy and lightweight. For young children, using plastic is most practical; it is easily repaired with cellophane tape. To find a workable pattern for the kite, check at your local library or book store, where many books on kite making are available.
2. Good kite line is necessary for successful kite flying. Along with the kite line, the flyer should use fishing swivels to prevent tangles and twists in the kite line. It also helps to have a good kite winder for the line that allows easy access with little work involved. Nothing is more frustrating than having the line tangle or break with a prize kite at risk!
3. Store-bought kites are plentiful, colorful and designed for flying easily. A visit to the local kite shop, toy store, or variety store will yield kites of all colors, sizes, styles, and prices. For young children, a delta-style kite will be the most stable and steadiest to fly. Another popular style for children is the long dragon kite, measuring from 5 to 45 feet, made of mylar plastic, and very lightweight for easy flying.
4. Find a flying site that is open, away from trees, utility poles and lines, and other kite-eating hazards. Open fields are safe and sunny, so don't forget to take along some sunscreen. Sometimes, after the kite has been up for a while, kite flyers wander over

into some shade and relax a bit, while the kite and the wind stay safe and steady.

5. Keep in mind that what goes up must come down. While it is great fun to let the kite line rush off the reel when the kite is climbing high in the sky, it can be very tiring to wind in more than a couple hundred feet of line. For young children, this is definitely not fun. For the adults who have to take over for the young children when they get tired of winding in the kite line, this might bring back memories of bad-time kite flying in their youth!
6. Make kite flying one part of the magical experience with the wind. Supplement the actual kite flying with stories and song about kites, wind, and the sky. Quote or make up poems about the wind. Draw pictures of the kite flying day. Find a new kite design to try out next time. Read up on how to measure the wind speed so that you know what it means when the breeze is described as "fresh." Make a list of other things that fly. Look up a picture of a windwagon in the history of transportation book. Try to catch the wind with an empty garbage bag. Blow bubbles that float in the wind and reflect the sun's rays. Run wild in the wind while you pretend to be a blowing leaf, jet plane, or swooping hawk.

After a day with the breezes a cold drink and good night's sleep will become the order for the day. Enjoy!





# BASIC TIMING . . . HELPING CHILDREN "Feel the Beat"

Phyllis S. Weikart

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One of the most important skill acquisitions in early childhood is "basic timing" the ability to feel a steady repetitious pulse (beat) and to sequence simple movements to the beat. A mastery of basic timing is necessary to successfully perform any task that involves movement. There is no such thing as movement without timing. If a person does not have the rudiments of timing, he or she will be deficient in a basic skill that is one of the foundations for successful early learning. Helping children develop this skill is a major responsibility of early childhood educators.

Today, only about 20 percent of our children begin kindergarten with "basic timing." Ideally about 90 percent of our children should have achieved this basic skill by that time. For this reason, I feel that preschool, kindergarten, and first grade teachers should only present activities that reinforce steady beat. I recommend they spend some time each day in a beat activity and alert the parents to the need for this basic skill so the awareness of beat can be reinforced at home.

Here are some suggestions for home and classroom activities that foster a basic awareness of beat:

- Parents can play instrumental music, recite nursery rhymes, or sing songs and rock, pat, or bounce the child to the beat.
- In the classroom, play instrumental music such as that found on the *Rhythmically Moving* albums and have the children pat body parts to the steady beat using both hands simultaneously (e.g. patting legs, head or chest).
- Many children in the classroom will have difficulty producing the steady beat themselves, and can only copy another's movements. If children do not have the basic feel of the beat, they will need you to physically pat them to the beat. Pat on both their shoulders simultaneously.
- Play instrumental music and have the children walk their feet to the beat, first in a sitting position, then standing, and finally walking about in the room. If children are inaccurate, do not call this to their attention, but continue to provide many opportunities to practice these skills.
- Avoid activities that use group clapping. This is a very difficult motor task that many children cannot perform successfully with the group until second grade. Use a two-hand pat on body parts or two-hand movements, e.g., shaking, punching, instead of the hand claps.
- Recite nursery rhymes or sing songs and have the children respond to the steady beat by patting or

tapping a body part using both hands simultaneously. Pat children's backs or shoulders to help reinforce the feel of beat. This activity may be extended by giving children opportunities to choose which part of the body they would like to pat and also by having them take turns leading the activity.

- Connect movement to language by having children chant the name of the body part and then pat as they chant, for example saying, "head, head, head, head" and patting the head as each word is recited.
- Repeat these kinds of activities daily for at least two to three minutes. Some excellent times are the beginning or end of the day, transition times, or preschool circle times. The few minutes a day you spend on beat activities will have important benefits for your students. Let's join together to help young children master a basic skill that seems to be one of the links to success in school!

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## For Your Information

Two series of fact sheets for child care providers are being offered by Michigan State University Cooperation Extension Service. The fact sheets present material on business management and child development. There are separate packages for center operators and home providers. Each package costs \$4.50. The deadline date for ordering is October 16, 1987.

To order send your name, address and type of packet (center or home), and \$4.50 to:

Marilyn Rudzinski  
Macomb County Cooperative  
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Mt. Clemens, MI 48043

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# DRAMATIZATION OF STORIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

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Storytime is an important part of the day. Dramatic play can bring it alive and can expand its value. A variety of techniques can accomplish this.

**Involve children in the magic of the language.** Choose stories with predictable storylines and repetitious phrases; invite children to say the phrases with you. It is fun to repeat phrases that tickle the tongue like "Not by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin."

**Use props.** Props help young children visualize elements of the story, making the story come alive. Read *Stone Soup* with a stone and pot nearby or make your own stone soup for snack time. The soldier tricking the town into sharing food is a difficult concept for young children to grasp. Visualizing the soup pot brimming with good foods to eat is an observation that increases the richness of the story.

**Use movement.** Encourage children to participate in actions described in the story. Read *Caps for Sale* inviting the children to imitate the peddler pointing his finger, stamping his feet and talking to the monkeys, and the monkeys' response. After reading *Frosty the Snowman* have the children pantomime snowmen melting in the sunshine.

**Help the children predict the outcome of the story.** While it may not be appropriate to frequently interrupt the reading of a story, occasionally it is a good idea to stop and ask questions to encourage the children to think about how the characters feel and what might happen next. During the reading of *Noisy Nora* some questions you might ask could include: "Why does Nora run away?", "How does she feel?", "What would you do?". The children might say, "See, we knew what was going to happen and we haven't even read this before!"

**Involve the children as an authors.** Record the thoughts and stories expressed by the children. The notion that children's stories can be written down and read by someone is a critical understanding in the language learning process. Use standard spelling but don't "correct" children's grammar.

**Use improvisation.** While it is not appropriate to expect young children to act out a story using exact dialogue, they can use actions and words. Provide props and dress up clothes, and suggest to the children that they pretend to be the characters in a familiar story. The story line will be of the children's creation. For example, Cinderella may take your dinner order, cook and put babies to bed. The important point is the children have tried on the role of a character, in this case Cinderella.

Dramatization of stories will become more complex and play-like as the children become older and more sophisticated. First and second grade children need little direction to imitate story dialogue and structure. For the preschool children the value lies in the enjoyment of the story, becoming involved with the story and interacting with peers. By providing a variety of dramatic play experiences, the teacher of young children builds a rich background for the children to become imaginative and successful readers.





# ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

Carole M. Grates, Center Licensing Consultant  
Saginaw County

*Once upon a time, a chattering group of little children stopped all their noise-making because a beautiful princess put a spell upon them. Her spell had such magic that these children could see far away places without even taking a journey.*

Who can cast such a magical spell? You, of course, whenever you tell a story. But this magical storytime does not happen unless you set the stage and plan carefully.

Choose a bright and inviting area of your center or home that is large enough for each child to have his own space. A large square of carpeting helps to define the space as well as adding to the comfort. If carpet is not available, use some tape on the floor to define the space.

Make sure the area you set aside is utilized for other activities during free play. It could be the block area or the large muscle area.

If you are lucky enough to have a large center, the story area can double as a language/art area. Stock it with some old pillows or a bean bag to invite individual or small group reading. Make the books and flannel board accessible to encourage children to read alone or to each other or to retell familiar flannel board stories.

The three major elements of a successful storytime are the group size, the amount of child involvement in the process, and the story itself. The smaller the groups, the more magical your storytime becomes. Small groups of 10 children with one adult each work better than one large group of children with two adults. If children are under 2½ years, keep it informal and spontaneous. Try reading stories to one or two at a time, never more than three or four.

A smaller group promotes the second element of success which is involvement. Each child has more opportunities to ask a question, make a contribution or play a part. With younger children, flannel board stories or stories with puppets and props are preferable. Ask the children to manipulate the flannel board characters or handle the props. Involve children in repetitive responses or in predicting what will happen next.

The third element, story choice, requires knowledge of child development coupled with understanding of the children in your specific environment. Choose stories that have some relationship to the children's lives. Some favorite themes include family life, animals, fears, getting along with friends, and feelings. *A Nightmare in My Closet* or *Where the Wild Things Are*, are universal favorites because they deal with children who have gained power over "monsters" they all imagine or dream about. Choose a book that is large enough for all to see, with pictures that are

colorful and attractive. Also consider the length of the story in relationship to the attention span of the group.

The storytelling process has three distinct phases. First, get the children's interest. For example, when introducing the nightmare book, begin by asking the children about their bad dreams. How do they feel when this happens?

Telling the story is more than just reading. Know the story so you can look away from the book. Change your voice for different characters. When the story is familiar, have the children say the dialogue. Stop occasionally and have them predict what will happen next.

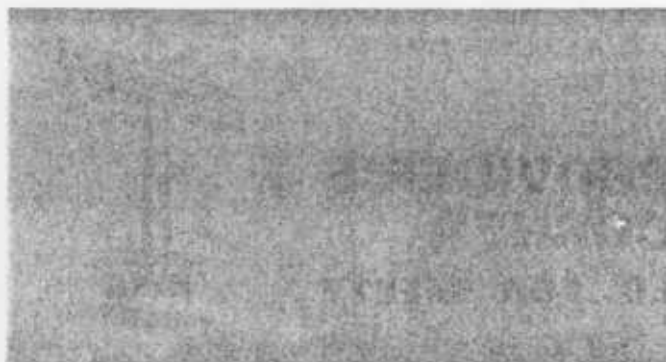
Finally, help the children retell the story or recap the major elements. Encourage them to relate similar experiences, express their anxieties or joys, or ask questions.

Storytime can be a special time for bonding between you and the children. You are sharing yourself and your time with them. More importantly, they are giving you their imagination and their minds. Charles A. Smith imagines the young child might say to you, "Here, Storyteller, take my mind on a journey; give it wings and lift it onto the winds of imagination."

May all your storytimes be a joy forever after.

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# RESOURCES — GROUP ACTIVITIES ISSUE

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## PROVIDER'S CORNER

### I.D. FOR SAFETY

Over the past few years throughout the state, people posing as department staff have attempted to gain and



in some cases have been allowed entry into private homes.

Day care homes and centers have been approached by these people who stated they were there to examine children or the facilities.

Please, for your own safety and the safety of children entrusted to you, ask for identification. All authorized department employees have photo I.D. cards with the State seal. Insist on seeing one. You may obtain additional verification by calling your local DSS office.

# SURVEY

Better Homes and Centers is your newsletter. We need your help to make it a publication that you can really use. As we enter our fifth year, we are asking you to take a few minutes to help shape our future.

1. Rank, in order of usefulness to you, the topics we have covered:

Fire Safety	_____	Health and Safety	_____
Business Aspects	_____	Summer Time Fun	_____
Program — School-Age	_____	Personnel Matters	_____
Infants/Toddlers	_____	Special Edition: Complaint Handling	_____
Preschool	_____	Readiness	_____
Guiding and Guarding Children	_____		

2. In the list above, circle those topics you would like to see covered again with new articles and information.
3. Would you like to receive a reprint of any issue? Which one(s)?
4. Would you be willing to pay for back issues?
5. Do you have suggestions for specific articles on the topics we are considering for the future:

Children with special needs — \_\_\_\_\_

Science — \_\_\_\_\_

Language and math — \_\_\_\_\_

Art — \_\_\_\_\_

Nutrition — \_\_\_\_\_

Creativity — \_\_\_\_\_

6. What suggestions do you have for general topics for future issues?

7. What regular features are most useful to you?

Resources	_____	Director's Corner	_____
Provider's Corner	_____	Announcements of Upcoming Events	_____
Question/Answer Column (proposed)	_____		

(Continued on page 12)



8. How would you grade us for:

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Informative Content	1	2	3	4
Readability	1	2	3	4
Interest Level	1	2	3	4
Helpfulness	1	2	3	4
Useful Topics	1	2	3	4
Length	1	2	3	4
Thoroughness	1	2	3	4

Comments on your "grades": \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was the complaint handling issue helpful to you in understanding division practice and policies? Are there other licensing topics you would like to see handled in a special issue this way?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Send your responses to this questionnaire, as well as articles or announcements of upcoming events, to:

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